

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 HA-05 CIAE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1589
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, IS
SUBJ: WEIZMAN CRITICIZES SHILO EPISODE

1. SUMMARY: IN SURPRISING SESSIONS FEBRUARY 28 OF THE
KNESSET SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, WEIZMAN
AND SEVERAL LIKUD MKS CRITICIZED GOI SETTLEMENT POLICY
AND ITS HANDLING OF THE SHILO ISSUE. DISCUSSIONS AT
SESSION WERE MADE PUBLIC, A RARE MOVE BY THE COMMITTEE;
THE MKS CLEARLY WANTED TO RET THEIR POSITIONS ON SETTLE-
MENTS ON THE ROCORD. A SUBCOMMITTEE HAS BEEN TASKED WITH
PREPARING A DRAFT DECISION FOR CONSIDERATION BY FULL COMMITTEE
NEXT WEEK. WHILE THE COMMITTEE MAY ADOPT A DECISION
CRITICAL OF SHILO, ITS RECOMMENDATION WOULD HAVE NO
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BINDING EFFECT ON THE GOVERNMENT. KNESSET FACTIONS STILL
INVOLVED IN CONSULTATIONS AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHICH
WAY THEY WILL GO. AT THE SESSION, THREE LIKUD MKS WERE
SURPRISINGLY CRITICAL OF SHILO. ALSO, AT THE SESSION
WEIZMAN SPOKE OUT STRONGLY AGAINST WILDCAT SETTLEMENT AND
ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD CALLED -- UNSUCCESSFULLY -- FOR
A CABINET DECISION TO REMOVE THE GUSH EMUNIM GROUP WHEN

IT HAD ORIGINALLY SETTLED AT SHILO IN EARLY JANUARY. WEIZMAN APPEARS TO BE TAKING A MORE AND MORE OUTSPOKEN PUBLIC LINE ON THE SETTLEMENTS AND SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES. EITHER HE SIMPLY DOES NOT CARE ABOUT THE FLAK HE MIGHT RECEIVE FROM BEGIN OR HIS HERUT COLLEAGUES, OR HE HAS DECIDED THAT HIS POLITICAL FIGURE MUST BE BASED ON A FIRM BUT PRAGMATIC (AND MODERATE) IMAGE, AND DRAWN FROM A WIDER BASE THAN SOLELY HERUT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE DISCUSSED GOI SETTLEMENT POLICY ON FEBRUARY 28 AT THE REQUEST OF DMC MK SHMUEL TOLEDANO, MINISTER OF DEFENSE WEIZMAN WAS THE STAR ATTRACTION AT WHAT WAS BY ALL ACCOUNTS A VERY LIVELY SESSION. WEIZMAN OUTSPOKENLY STATED THAT IF IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT THE SETTLERS AT SHILO DO NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK, THE APPROPRIATE CONCLUSIONS WILL HAVE TO BE DRAWN. FURTHERMORE, HE REMARKED THAT HE HAD CALLED -- UNSUCCESSFULLY -- FOR A CABINET DECISION TO REMOVE THE GUSH EMUNIM GROUP WHEN IT ORIGINALLY SETTLED WITHOUT APPROVAL AT SHILO IN EARLY JANUARY. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO HAARETZ (BENZIMAN), WEIZMAN SAID HE "FELT THE SAME WAY TODAY ABOUT ANY GROUP TRYING TO SETTLE AT ANY SITE WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL." ACCORDING TO THE JERUSALEM POST, WEIZMAN DECLARED THAT HE FOR ONE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PREVENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPETITIONS OF SHILO.

3. ANOTHER SURPRISE WAS PROVIDED WHEN THREE PROMINENT LIKUD MEMBERS ON THE COMMITTEE CRITICIZED THE SHILO AFFAIRS. HAIM KORFU, HERUT MK AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE KNESSET COALITION FACTION, SAID THAT WHILE HE ABSOLUTELY BACKED THE GOVERNMENT'S SETTLEMENT POLICY, HE WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANCEL ITS DECISION TO ESTABLISH THREE NEW SETTLEMENTS IN MILITARY BASES (STATE 51718). HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE AUTHORITY TO CEASE ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENT DURING NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT THIS WOULD BE REASONABLE GESTURE. HE RECOLLECTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE LIKUD HAD ALWAYS CALLED FOR THE APPLICATION OF ISRAELI LAW ON THE WEST BANK, NO ONE HAD MADE MUCH OF A FUSS OF THE GOVERNMENT NOT YET DOING THIS.

4. COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MOSHE ARENS (HERUT) SAID THE GUSH EMUNIM FLAUNTED STATE AUTHORITY AND MADE A VERY BAD IMPRESSION. HOWEVER, HE HAD RESERVATIONS OVER KORFU'S POSITION. ACCORDING TO HAARETZ, WHEN ARENS TRIED TO TELL WEIZMAN HIS VIEW ON SETTLEMENT POLICY DURING NEGOTIATIONS, WEIZMAN SHARPLY RETORTED THAT "I REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF THE JEWISH NATION MUCH BETTER THAN YOU REPRESENTED THE GOVERNMENT'S PEACE PROGRAM DURING YOUR RECENT

VISIT TO THE U.S."

5. LIBERAL MK PESSAH GRUPPER TERMED THE SHILO SETTLEMENT A DISGRACE AND SAID IT MADE A MOCKERY OF ISRAEL. IN HIS OPINION, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REMOVE THE "DISGUISE" OF SHILO AND MAKE IT A REGULAR SETTLEMENT, BUT IF IT CANNOT DO THIS THE SETTLERS SHOULD BE REMOVED.

6. AMONG LIKUD MEMBERS, ONLY LA'AM MK MOSHE SHAMIR, ALSO AFFILIATED WITH THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT, WAS IN FAVOR OF SHILO. HE SAID THAT NOBODY IN THE KNESSET WANTED THE SETTLEMENT SHIFTED EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS. SHAMIR BELIEVED SHILO TO BE ANALOGOUS TO THE TOWER AND STOCKADE SETTLEMENTS PUT UP DURING THE

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1930'S DESPITE BRITISH AND ARAB OPPOSITION.

7. AFTER OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE SPOKE, YOSEF TAMIR (LIBERAL) PROPOSED A RESOLUTION AT THE END OF THE MEETING EXPRESSING RESERVATIONS AT THE WAY THE SHILO SETTLEMENT HAD BEEN SET UP. AT THE REQUEST OF KORFU AND SARID (LABOR) IT WAS AGREED THAT THE KNESSET FACTIONS WOULD CONSULT AMONG THEMSELVES AND THE

COMMITTEE WOULD VOTE ON A RESOLUTION AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT WEEK. ACCORDING TO A PRESS SOURCE, A SUB-COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF SHAMIR, SARID, AND RUBENSTEIN (DMC) WAS FORMED TO WORK OUT AN ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION.

8. ACCORDING TO LITANI OF HAARETZ, WEIZMAN HAS IN RECENT WEEKS TOLD A NUMBER OF SMALL GATHERINGS THAT EVEN IF ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORK IS CARRIED OUT AT SHILO, THERE WAS NO REASON FOR THE DIGGERS TO REMAIN AT THE SITE OVERNIGHT. FURTHERMORE, WEIZMAN WAS SAID TO OPPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SMALL SETTLEMENTS UNABLE TO STAND ON THEIR OWN FEET. RATHER, HE FAVORED THE THICKENING OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS. WEIZMAN EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT IF IT IS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH MILITARY CAMPS ON THE WEST BANK (PRESUMABLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SETTLERS), SOLDIERS CAN SLEEP THERE RATHER THAN SETTLERS. WEIZMAN FELT THAT IF SETTLEMENTS WERE TO BE SET UP, IT SHOULD BE DONE IN A SERIOUS AND DIGNIFIED FASHION.

9. COMMENT: THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE FEBRUARY 28 SESSION WERE MADE PUBLIC, A RARITY FOR THE KNESSET SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. APPARENTLY THE MKS WANTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE CLEAR THEIR OWN POSITIONS ON THE SETTLEMENT ISSUE. VIEWS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE BROKE DOWN INTO THREE GROUPS: THOSE OPPOSING A SETTLEMENT AT SHILO IN ANY FORM; THOSE WHO FAVORED EITHER RECOGNIZING SHILO AS A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OR REMOVING IT; AND THOSE WHO FAVORED CONTINUING THE SHILO ARCHAEOLOGICAL COVER. INTERESTINGLY THE LATTER WAS A SMALL MINORITY. THIS RAISES A POSSIBILITY THAT NEXT WEEK THE COMMITTEE WILL RECOMMEND CHANGING

THE STATUS OF SHILO, POSSIBLY EVEN INCLUDING ITS EVACUATION. HERETOFORE, BEGIN HAS REFUSED TO TAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS REGARDING THE FLAUNTING OF GOI AUTHORITY BY GUSH EMUNIM, ESPECIALLY AT SHILO. IF THE COMMITTEE PROPOSES SOME FIRM HANDLING OF THE SHILO IMBROGLIO, BEGIN WILL WELCOME HAVING SOME ASSISTANCE ON THE HARD DECISION ON SHILO. THE KNESSET FACTIONS AND THE SUB-COMMITTEE ARE STILL DELIBERATING OVER THEIR NEXT STEPS, AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHICH WAY THEY WILL GO.

10. AS WE WILL BE DISCUSSING MORE FULLY IN A SEPARATE CABLE WEIZMAN IS MORE AND MORE TAKING A MODERATE PUBLIC LINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON SETTLEMENTS, AS WELL AS OTHER ISSUES. EITHER HE SIMPLY DOES NOT CARE ABOUT THE FLAK HE MIGHT RECEIVE FROM BEGIN OR HIS

HERUT COLLEAGUES, OR HE HAS DECIDED THAT HIS POLITICAL FUTURE
MUST BE BASED ON A FIRM BUT PRAGMATIC (AND MODERATE) IMAGE,
AND DRAWN FROM A WIDER BASE THAN SOLELY HERUT.
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